

CAPTAIN FLASHBACK

A fanzine composed for the 395th distribution of the Turbo-Charged Party-Animal Amateur Press Association, from the joint membership of Andy Hooper and Carrie Root, residing at 11032 30th Ave. NE Seattle, WA 98125. E-mail Andy at fanmailaph@aol.com, and you may reach Carrie at carrieroot49@yahoo.com. This is a Drag Bunt Press Production, completed on 5/21/2019.

CAPTAIN FLASHBACK is devoted to old fanzines, monster movies, garage bands and other fascinating phenomena of the 20th Century. Issue #6 leads off with a journey into the heart of hipsterdom, with some highlights of our April vacation trip to visit Carrie's son Harlan in Brooklyn, New York.

. And after the usual lengthy comments on the previous mailing, the **I REMEMBER ENTROPY** Department presents a series of fanzine pieces by and about Harlan's namesake, Harlan Jay Ellison (1934-2018), with items by Malcolm Ashworth, Dick Lupoff, Bill Rotsler, and Harlan Himself.

APRIL IN BROOKLYN

A Vacation Excursion
by Andy Hooper

For the past four years, Carrie and I have made Corflu the focus of our major travel experience of the year. We also travel to Madison and New Mexico and Pasadena to visit family, but Corflu often represents our best chance to visit someplace new. Well, this time, we got both new surroundings and family, because we made our way to Rockville, Maryland and Corflu 36 via Brooklyn New York, and a weekend with my stepson Harlan Harris. Harlan is now working for another in a series of data-service-related startups, one which he really likes; and he has a unique first-floor apartment with full use of the back yard, and a shockingly-affordable monthly rent (well, for *Brooklyn*); clearly, we needed to come and see this wonder!



Carrie Root outside the Brooklyn Museum.

Part of the plan was to travel a full week before the convention, so that we would have all the time we needed to recover from jet lag and relax into having a good time, instead of thinking about recently-abandoned work. I had a new radio play and auctions and an award presentation to worry about at the con, but nothing specific to occupy my time while we were in Brooklyn. The greatest source of stress was figuring out where we wanted to eat.

We had more trouble adapting to local time, as the hotel we chose was heavily patronized by air crews from Japan. They had no reason to adapt to local time, as they would be home again in about 12 hours, and they seemed to spend most early mornings laughing &

[Continued on Page 6]

Issue #6, May, 2019

Did you see his tie? A single Windsor. The easiest knot to undo.

Comments on Turbo-Apa #394:

OFFICIAL BUSINESS: I have been offering to serve another term as the Official Editor of Turbo-Apa for a number of years, but I remain aware of the preference among the other members to have a Madison resident serve as editor. If I took the job, it could be argued that TURBO would no longer be a "Madison Apa."

Contemporary technology has made it much easier for members to submit their work without making use of express mail and other expensive services; and if I were mailing every member's copy to them via first class mail, there would be no more cases of members completely forgetting to pick up their copy, as befell Jim and Diane in April. It's also a well-known phenomenon that people seldom write letters of comment to fanzines they receive at conventions; one wonders if the rate of mailing comment contribution would increase if everyone got their copy in the mail?

Anyway, if we reach a point where no one in Madison is willing to do the job, and the Turbo is going to go under if some out-of-towner doesn't step up to do the job, then I am definitely your huckleberry.

And it would be quite unforgivable to approach the end of Hope and Karl's tenure as Official Editors without thanking them for serving in the capacity longer than anyone else in the 33-year history of Turbo. I don't know if they will find the time to read this appreciation, but it's no less sincere for that -- they've gone on doing this for us for years after they stopped being regular contributors otherwise, and therefore haven't received much feedback beyond complaints about late and missing mailings. I really hope that you will remain in the apa, and that you will be able to make a small contribution with the time you used to spend collating each issue.

Cover (Jae Leslie Adams): This brought back fond memories of covers constructed of mixed media (sometimes very mixed) from the early days of Turbo-Apa, when many of the members seemed to be frustrated guerilla artists. Points

for recycling as well. The closest I ever came to this sort of thing was with photocopy collages, with images snipped out of magic show catalogues and wargaming magazines. It occurs to me that I could accomplish very similar effects using the printer/scanner sitting next to my elbow....

AN WISCONZINE, Greg Rihn: As usual, the breadth of works you chose to review in your April issue was quite dizzying, ranging from the remake of Dumbo to "The Mystic Arts of Tibet." But as you chose to respond to my Civil War discursions with some remarks on General Joseph Bailey and the Red River campaign, that is naturally the content which I am bound to respond to.

Latter-day writers credit Henry Halleck and Nathaniel Banks with grand strategic goals, including the suppression of communication between the Confederate Government and that of Mexico, which was then ruled by the French-appointed Emperor Maximilian I. Writers of the 19th Century were almost unanimous in asserting that the purpose of the campaign was quite simply to steal Northern Louisiana's cotton crop, and sell it on the international market. When Banks' army occupied Alexandria, Louisiana, and found that the Confederates had already burned the many thousands of bales of cotton stored there, a visible stream of disappointed speculators could be seen limping their way back to New Orleans and St. Louis.

In addition to Joseph Bailey's cofferdams, the other detail on the campaign which made an impression on me was the presence of Confederate regiments that were mounted on horses, but armed with long rifles and bayonets, and who therefore dismounted to fight. "Mounted Infantry" became increasingly important in the late-war campaigns in Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and what was still then "Indian Territory" in Oklahoma. It was a preview of how the war would continue against various Native American nations into the 1890s.

OCCAM'S WHISKERS, Georgie Schnobrich: I also enjoyed reading your impressions of "The Mystic Arts of Tibet." I feel like that question of permanent vs. impermanent art is one that artists have asked themselves from the first time someone drew lines in the sand and watched the tide wash them away. Obviously, some artists were anxious to see their images outlive them, which is why they rendered them on walls many feet below the surface of the earth. But I also think some artists have always been eager to see how the earth will act on their creations, and how long some sign of their presence will endure. You have to choose your materials carefully; a pile of head-sized rocks will likely remain where you put them unless another human being figures out a reason to move them. But sand has the great virtue of ubiquity and impermanence; if the work displeases, a sweep of a broom will leave no clue the offense was ever given. Deep characters, those monks.

LETTER FROM THE FARM, Marilyn Holt: It was terribly sad, but also kind of sweet sharing your memories of Vonda McIntyre. And I was aware of the parts that David Hartwell and Vonda had played in the creation of the ceontemporary Calrion West Workshop, but not that you had been so centrally involved from its (re) inception. Vonda was very generous with both her time and her home to fans, so I have many happy memories of social events with her. She was also kind enough to workshop with Jane Hawkins, Any Thomson, Kate Schaeffer and myself during the mid-1990s. Through that group, I was able to share the creation of Vonda's novel Nutilus, and Amy's novel The Color of Distance. I don't know that my contributions were of any real use to her, but meeting the workshop deadline made for helpful milestones. And by being Vonda's friend, we were also able to share her close connection to Ursula le Guin, and we were present for some memorable moments because of that, too.

But we were never in the front rank of Vonda's friends in Seattle fandom, having arrived here a mere 27 years ago, and we did not seek out her company after the public announcement of her

diagnosis. I remembered from Randy Byers' last few months how much of an effort it was for him to simply acknowledge people, and I felt like Vonda should spend her energy with people as close to her as you were. I admired Seattle fandom's relationship with Vonda—it was clear that the affections involved were completely mutual, and one had to remind oneself that those were *Nebula Awards* scattered among the beaded sea creatures in her living room. All the unhealthy, obsessive hero-worshipping elements were missing from that relationship, and it was one of the reasons why I wanted to live in Seattle fandom.

MADISON FOURSQUARE#30, Scott Custis & Jeanne Gomoll: I am openly awestruck by the numerous printing projects that you have undertaken since retiring, Jeanne. I'm really looking forward to the new edition of the Carl Brandon collection, which I imagine is going to arrive in the next two or three days, per your recent email. Other books with collections of writing originally published in fanzines are popping up all over the place. I've been daydreaming about people who deserve to have their work published in new collections...like Susan Wood (and Mike Glicksohn!), Mae Strelkov, Abi Frost, Redd Boggs and many others. I hope we see a wave of such collections.

One of the most popular activities at Corflu 36 was keeping company with Joe Sclari, Edie Stern and Mark Olson, as they scanned old fanzines for the Fanac.org archive. When we started Corflu, people used to spend the weekend hunched over mimeographs, trying to publish one-shots. Now, we occupy our time pulling out staples, feeding pages into the scanner, and saving the output onto various laptops and thumb drives, preparatory to posting them on the web. Is this science fiction?

Scott, I had a feeling that you would be among the readers who could make their way through my Grandfather Phil Oakey's paper on Vicksburg. I'm glad you found it of interest. I think Cadets Oakey and Matthias were a little

[Continues next page.]

Why bother wearing any clothes at all?

“How would you like to go for a drive in the country tomorrow?” asked Boyd Raeburn.

Comments on Turbo-Apa #394, continued:

MADISON FOURSQUARE#30, Scott Custis & Jeanne Gomoll, continued:

opaque in their conclusions, because they were writing for the benefit of an ROTC instructor who was familiar with both the details of the campaign and the general principles of warfare. Confederate General Pemberton’s error in defending his foothold on the Mississippi River was committing to the static defense of Vicksburg, particularly when he had another army gathering under Joe Johnston at Jackson, Mississippi. Had he moved to join Johnston at Jackson, and kept the bulk of his forces ready to attack the rear of Grant’s army, the latter would not have been able to commit completely to the siege of the troops remaining in Vicksburg. Of course, it was still most likely that Grant’s corps would have crushed Pemberton and Johnston’s army anyway, and walked into Vicksburg a few weeks earlier. But other outcomes were possible in that scenario, while there was only one conceivable end once Pemberton allowed himself to be trapped inside Vicksburg. Perhaps if they’d had a dragon....

And then back to both of you: I hope you’ll read my comment to Marilyn above – I’m so very glad that Jeanne is putting together a book in appreciation of Vonda McIntyre. I wouldn’t be surprised if your trip here for the memorial event in June will be our only chance to see you this year, so I hope that there will be some opportunity for you to pay a brief visit to our house. We’ll be celebrating 15 years here in August, and I don’t think you’ve seen it.

SONOVA QUARK, Steven Vincent Johnson: Steve, you know I’ve had an on-again, off-again relationship with the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis. I’m more open to listening to contactee/abductee accounts, because they don’t seem particularly connected to all the aerial phenomena which have been proved to be plovers or mysterious lenticular condensation trails, etc. That noted Fortean theorist Ray Palmer always hoped that there would never be a real solution to the UFO phenomena, as a mystery, if it is to be of value

to human beings, ought never to be resolved completely. Some more contemporary abductee stories speculate on travel between dimensions, quantum connections between galaxies, and communication between different universes or realities. I find it remarkable that the visitors seem to take advantage of each new impossible technology that science and science fiction can imagine. But I can’t deny that they represent more effective ways of traveling between worlds than saucer-shaped craft or enormous mystery dirigibles.

But if it is possible, I am a bit less sanguine on the general topic of outside intervention in the evolution of the human organism and its culture. While the idea of a circumpolar shamanistic tradition at the close of the last ice age is still a controversial topic, I think it was completely within the abilities of Neolithic humans, without any contribution from time travelers or interstellar seeding programs. That goes for the pyramids and all the other wonders we can’t figure out how to do ourselves. Somehow, the idea that people of the past might have known something that we don’t has challenged the reason of generations of modern observers, and inspired fabulists from Joseph Smith to Dr. G. Patrick Flanagan. I still find it fun, but also strive to give ancient people their creative due.

TAGALOG, Darlene Coltrain: Your correction on the spelling of your name is duly noted. And the pictures of your purple crocuses were beautiful. Our spring came on a bit later than we are used to here, because we had an actual burst of winter weather in February. Various crocuses in our yard had the unusual experience of actually waiting for the snow to melt. But after that, the pattern has been warm and dry when you continued to have snowstorms. We were delighted to find that there were as yet no mosquitos at large in Maryland and Virginia in early May, a condition which has surely changed by now.

THINGS THAT BEGIN WITH B, Jim Hudson & Diane Martin: Enjoyed your construction and

travel matter, and Jim was kind enough to comment further on the question of whether people arrived in the Americas on foot or in boats (or, per Steve Johnson, in saucer-shaped craft). I think it will remain impossible to ever arrive at a definitive answer. Regardless of how people were adapted to living before they moved, or how they survived while they were moving, they would very rapidly adapt to their new surroundings once they arrived in them. So even if those people at the very early sites in South America rode in dugouts from Asia or Micronesia to reach the continent, they and their descendants modified their material culture to fit the place where they now lived.

I find myself wondering what was different about the people who occupied these early sites, and those who seem to have spread over both continents, using the Clovis and Folsom tool kits. Was it just that the latter group didn't face quite the same towering walls of ice that visitors would have seen around 14,000 BC? It certainly would have encouraged me to keep moving toward the equator.

KN, Kim and Kathi Nash: Reading your remarks about the upcoming Wiscon left me thinking that the general attitude of the older generation of Wiscon fans is very similar to the way fanzine fans used to talk about the Worldcon before the "fan lounge" was invented for them to hang out in and meet one another. The way we talked Worldcon committees into giving us the space was to present it as a part of exhibits, with mag racks full of old zines and giant reproductions of cover art, and photos and artifacts devoted to old timey fans. And since old people need comfortable places to sit, well....

I'd envision a space where exhibits about pioneering women and people of color and Hannes Bok could be put up – I'd imagine that most contemporary Wiscon attendees would ignore it, just as the majority of Worldcon members have ignored the Faan lounge. They would require interpretative personnel, and the personnel would need some place to sit and a

place to set their coffee cups...pretty soon, you've got a clean, well-lighted place where people can gather. A Safe Space for those yet to be re-educated. Just smile and wave as the rest of the world passes you by. Just like sitting at a huckster table used to be.

CONJUNCTIVE DISORDERS, Cathy Gilligan: Your zine was composed entirely of comments on the March mailing; and while I'll never criticize that as a priority, my choice is to either continue our previous conversation or barge into one you're having with another member. So, I'll just ramble on about games and Christmas a little longer. It's funny that all my memories of games at holidays seem to revolve around visits to my Aunt and Uncle in Lincoln Park, Michigan. My cousin Laurie's husband Gary was an indefatigable game player, and would indulge me in board games like "King Oil" and "Masterpiece." But my most vivid memories are of playing the *Jeopardy!* home game, complete with the little red plastic windows that revealed the answers when the dollar amounts were pulled away. My Scottish grandmother – b. 1897 – was an enthusiastic player, and frequently knew the answers. But no power on Earth could induce her to click her little tin clicker before blurting out the question. I feel like those experiences instilled a lifelong love of trivia – and a passionate focus on hitting the clicker first.

FANDOMAIN TC #29, Patrick Ijima-Washburn: Yow, your trip to the Hollywood Walk of Fame looked like incredible fun! Clearly, bringing a wide-eyed daughter along for the experience was the element missing from my somewhat less hilarious tour of the Boulevard. And I completely agreed with your decision to start by getting a good dose of the ocean at Santa Monica, then working your way inland. If I had to pick just one L.A. location to visit, I think I would choose the museum at the LaBrea tar pits. But your choices seem really cool too, at least so far. Looking forward to Part 2!



"I thought we could go to Fort Erie and find Will Straw"

A Key to Linos published in April in *Captain Flashback #5*:

Page 2: “It’s crazy how kids can fall asleep sober like that.”

Linda Belcher (John Roberts), “A River Runs Through Bob,” S. 4, Ep. 1, *Bob’s Burgers*.

Page 3: “People don’t want other people to be people.”

Line from *The Shadow of the Torturer* by Gene Wolfe (1931-2019).

Page 4: “I have to talk to Rachel Maddow. Only one of us can have this haircut. ”

Jack Donaghy (Alec Baldwin), from “Reagening,” S. 5, Ep. 5, *30 Rock*.

Page 5: “One must not judge everyone in the world by his qualities as a soldier – otherwise we should have no civilization.” Attributed to German Field Marshall Erwin Rommel (1891-1944).

Page 6: “You hate the public. You’re a detective.”

Detective Roland West (Stephen Dorff) implores his partner to reconsider career suicide, S. 3, Ep. 8, *True Detective*.

Page 7: “You will fly around in circles for months looking down on Fandom...”

&**Page 8:** “...until all your money is gone and you die of starvation like me.”

The hapless passenger of Swift’s “Aeroplanograph” warns Jophan, from Chapter Two of *The Enchanted Duplicator*.

Page 9: “Rick, you’re doing this bit while your brain is melting. ”

Insectoid spy Cornelius Daniel (Nathan Fillion), S.3, Ep.1 “The Rickshank Rickdemption,” *Rick & Morty*.

Page 10: “First thing you learn is – you’re the last guy to invent teleportation.”

Rick Sanchez (Justin Roiland). “The Rickshank Rickdemption,” *Rick & Morty*.

April in Brooklyn

[Continued from page one]

chasing one another up and down the halls of the 14th floor. When we came out later, we found many little empty liquor bottles piled on room service trays in the hallway.

Our first day in Brooklyn also happened to be Carrie’s birthday, and we began our celebration with waffles and strawberries in Harlan’s kitchen. His apartment actually has three rooms on two levels, apart from the kitchen and bathroom, but only one of them has the right number of windows and doors to qualify as an actual bedroom. Because of this, the landlord is pretty limited in what he can ask for the place, which makes it even more appealing.

It was a mild day, sort of half-sunny, and Harlan led us on a walk from his neighborhood North to Prospect Park, which provides Brooklyn with the same kind of green gap in the urban landscape that Central Park gives Manhattan. It’s quite a bit smaller, but if you add the footprint of the Brooklyn zoo and the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, it’s more than most people would want to walk around.

We were intrigued by the prospect of the Botanical Garden, but Harlan warned us that some sort of anime-related cosplay event was going on that day, as various characters posed for one another beneath the famous boulevard of

cherry blossoms. We saw various stragglers from this event throughout the afternoon, bright motes of velour and kabuki makeup in the soft green distance.

Because this was a Saturday afternoon, the park was in heavy use. There were many two-person teams playing Beach Volleyball on muddy courts that must have discouraged diving and digging for balls. But you have to practice somewhere. Meanwhile, we also passed several birthday parties anchored on picnic shelters, but largely conducted inside orange snow-fence rave gardens, where clouds of pre-teen kids grooved out to a selection of 1990s acid house and 21st Century electronic dance music hits.

Because this activity worked off the waffles, we stopped at a random café, and ordered some drinks and a delicious tiny vegetable pizza between two tortillas that was referred to as a “quesadilla” in the menu. I’ve never had a quesadilla made with mushrooms, pesto and mozzarella before, but this was an excellent introduction to the passionate experimentation and fusion of flavor that characterized many of Brooklyn’s restaurants.

We bought some metro passes for the weekend and jumped on the train back to the War Memorial at the south end of the park. Our path

took us past the Barclay Center, a sports arena with green-friendly turf growing on its roof. The New York Islanders hockey team had played there the night before, and Harlan assured us that the area would be awash in fans when the series resumed. Brooklyn was a collage of old and new buildings; real skyscrapers were going up all around us, but there were also still many blocks of mixed storefronts and apartments in buildings that were easily 80 or 90 years old. And walk a few blocks off of Atlantic or Flatbush Avenue, not far from Harlan's block, and you're looking at houses that easily date to the 19th Century.

Harlan treated us to a restaurant on 3rd Avenue called "Runner & Stone" for Carrie's birthday dinner. He belongs to a Brooklyn group of "Slow Food" activists, who seek out sustainable locally-sourced ingredients, traditional cooking methods and well-treated employees. The place where he took us had earned their rather coveted "Snail of Approval," so we had a clear conscience through a leisurely collision of first, second and third plates, with several generous glasses of very nice wine for Carrie and Harlan. This clearly left her in a state of reduced responsibility, as several desserts appeared on our table, and were also consumed. The walk back to our hotel was accomplished with much weaving and leaning, and I really don't recall anything else until we were at brunch the following morning.

We were then joined by Ray (short for Rachel) whom Harlan had been seeing for about three months. She runs a non-profit that somehow diverts young offenders from jail by allowing them to work in community garden projects. This had recently required her to attend large fund-raising galas to ask celebrities – and their spouses – for money. She's a native of Brisbane, Australia, and went to some lengths to mention that she had a very working-class background, so this new aspect of her job is particularly unfamiliar. I think we both thought she was charming, and had she asked us for a contribution, we likely would have made one.

Later that afternoon, we used Harlan's expert knowledge of the subway to arrive in Midtown Manhattan in a little over 30 minutes. Because the Guggenheim's original gallery is under repair (I assume it leaks), Carrie and Harlan agreed to a return trip to the Museum of Modern Art. I'd never been before, and was struck by the press of people that seemed to fill every lobby, every gallery, and every stairwell; but Harlan assured me that this was a fairly light crowd, and that we would have no trouble seeing whatever we chose to visit. And so we did cover the great majority of the building, beginning with paintings from the 19th and early 20th Century, and then just wandering through mazes of media, created by a teeming legion of artists. Some of those works I've known about for more than 40 years, but was repeatedly surprised by their actual size; postcard reproductions give no clue how big the original is.

I think my favorite exhibit was "Lincoln Kirstein's Modern," an overview of the life and collections of one of the museum's most important organizers and benefactors, also a founder of the New York City Ballet. This included work in just about every durable media, including a number of mimeographed publications created by art students at Harvard – and naturally, these were quite indistinguishable from fanzines, albeit examples with very good



Rear view of Harlan Harris' apartment in Brooklyn.

She shops at Tiffany's like other women enter a supermarket.

I never understood boarding school. It's like prison with cricket, isn't it?

cover art.

It was an engrossing and exhausting afternoon; we didn't linger even ten minutes downtown before getting back on the train to Brooklyn. That evening we ate in a maze-like food court under a shopping mall just a few blocks north of Harlan's apartment. There were about 25 different vendors, and none of them were national chains. We all wandered around and found our own choices. Carrie got a huge Berlin-style doner kebab; Harlan got Shanghai street tacos; and I ordered takeout paella with shrimp and chorizo. Afterwards, Harlan introduced us to the "Climate Change" edition of the board game "Evolution." He cleaned our clocks, but by the end of the game we knew what we were trying to do, and were eager to play again.

On Monday, Harlan had to go to work, so we were left to entertain ourselves. Unfortunately, a lot of public attractions in Brooklyn were closed, including the Botanical Gardens. Most of the Brooklyn Museum was closed as well, but we were able to see Kehinde Wiley's massive "Napoleon Leading the Army Over the Alps," which is hanging in the public lobby. It's quite a treat to see a ten foot canvas in person, and photographs do no justice to its vivid colors.

We also visited the Fort Greene Monument, which memorializes several thousand prisoners of war who died in British custody during the War for Independence. They were kept aboard ships moored in Wallabout Bay west of Williamsburg. Fort Greene defended southern Long Island during the Federal Period, but it was dismantled in the 1830s, and the site became one of New York's first public memorials.

Harlan knew that we were looking at a solid week of restaurant meals, so he was kind enough to offer to let us cook something ourselves in his kitchen. We visited his favorite local grocery, and found that it was almost as much of a maze as the mysterious food court; but were able to buy pasta and vegetables and some dry Portuguese sausage; and Carrie and I made a pretty successful dinner, with only about a dozen

questions asking where things were. We finished the evening with another game of "Evolution: Climate Change Edition," and gave a much better account of ourselves than the night before. Harlan still won, but we were within sight.

By this time we were pretty relaxed, although our legs suggested that we might want to spend a few less hours standing and walking than we had done for the past three days. Luckily, we had planned to pass most of it on the train. We'd take Amtrak down to Washington's Union Station, then cab to Dulles airport to pick up a rental car, which we would use touring Maryland and getting to the convention in Rockville. The following Tuesday, we would return it to the airport and fly back to Seattle.

It's always an adventure trying to ride a commuter train at rush hour with a collection of large suitcases; happily, the trip to Penn Station was pretty direct. It was much more challenging figuring out where we ought to actually enter the station from the street, but we still got in with nearly an hour to spare. Baggage check was much more basic than at any airport, and they might have checked that our identification matched the names on our tickets – but certainly no more than once. Before we had time to play more than two hands of Gin, the train began to clatter away from the hundreds of yards of dimly-lit platform, and on the way to New Jersey. Over the next three hours, we passed through the outskirts of Trenton, Philadelphia and Baltimore, before arriving in DC.

I had finally managed to find a crummy meal in New York – the sandwich I bought at a coffee shop in Penn Station was quite horrible. And it would take us several hours of driving around traffic jams to reach our motel in Silver Spring, just a few miles from former Madison fans John Peacock and Paula Lewis. We would end up enjoying a dinner with them the following Sunday after the Con – but that's a story to be taken up in a later issue,



I REMEMBER ENTROPY DEPARTMENT

Pieces by and about Harlan Ellison (1934-2018):

1.) Verse by Mal Ashworth.
Published by Owen Whiteoak in his fanzine
**GOOD TASTE IS TIMELESS (or GOOD
TIMES ARE TASTELESS)**, May, 1988

2.) A letter by Harlan Ellison.
Published by Ron and Cindy Smith, in their
fanzine **INSIDE and SCIENCE FICTION
ADVERTISER #8**, March, 1955

3.) A review of the Dangerous Visions
anthology by Richard Lupoff. Published by
Andy Porter in his **FAPA** fanzine
**TWENTIETH CENTURY UNLIMITED
#2**, May, 1971,

4.) **THE KONG PAPERS**, a collaboration
between Harlan Ellison and artist Bill
Rotsler, published in 1969.

I've got science for any occasion.

Part I:

Ode to Harlan Ellison

Shall I compare thee to a sponge cake universe?
Thou hast a bigger ego
But less jam-filling in the middle...

(By Mal Ashworth (1933-2002). From a letter to
GOOD TASTE IS TIMELESS, published by
Owen Whiteoak, May, 1988.

Part II:

A Letter from Harlan Ellison

Published by Ron and Cindy Smith, in their
fanzine **INSIDE and SCIENCE FICTION
ADVERTISER #8**, March, 1955. [*I offer this as
an example of Ellison's furious typing skills; he
was notorious for being able to compose articles
and stories even while a party raged in the room
around him. This was originally composed and
published as a single immense paragraph; I have
added a single break to facilitate layout and to
take at least some pity on the reader. -APH]*

"INSIDE/SFA made its appearance and was
read in one sitting... Your layout, with one or
two exceptions, is strikingly original. I was most
impressed by the design and positioning of the
three illustrations for Ludwig's stories. It was a
superb job... The cover is suitably avant-garde,
satisfying even the most progressive, while
retaining a certain air of décolletage for those
who like their amateur magazines with a touch

of informality. I would rate it slightly less than
magnificent, but quite a few marks above
excellent... The inside art, with the exception of
Terry Carr's rather amateurish illustrations, was
exceptional. Hunter unquestionably takes the
prize. Words fail. Morton and Price were so-so.
Austin was, as per his wont, outstanding.
Particularly the illustration for the Rocklynne
article. Naaman and Dollens were typical
Naaman and Dollens. After a certain time,
excellence tends to pall. When one is continually
slapped in the face with monstrous nebulae,
flaming novae, starward-reaching Earthlings, et
al, one begins to tire a bit faster than
imperceptibly. Morris would do better to
understate his case... But, to these jaded eyes,
the best illustration in the entire book was the
center cartoon by Paul Blaisdell. In all my life I
have never seen such a tremendous s.f. cartoon
that served so beautifully as a "straight" cartoon.
This is the type of double-entendre humor that is
so often sought, so often degenerates into smut,
and is so seldom achieved."

"The other two, though, were miserable from a
humorous standpoint... My sympathies are, of
course, with Paul, but for the record, this IS
DEFINITELY NOT the first time in twelve
years a theft has been perpetrated at a
Convention. If we were to add up only the
known thefts at Cons, ranging from original
manuscripts and illustrations all the way through
boxes of new books from publishers to a hotel-
owned mimeograph machine and ending with

...having lost the global war to us, the American youth have developed a talent for dissembling.

grass mats saying “SF Convention”, we’d have a dossier big enough for any metropolitan police department to spend two weeks booking properly. No, the chances of you ever getting word who goneffed your pix (and by the way, I saw them and they were excellent jobs of draftsmanship) is slim, for a known fan, or one who has contact with a large group of fans would not be foolish enough to swing with it, since it could too easily be traced. More probably it was one of your transient SanFranners who dropped in for the day and wanted a souvenir... The article itself was uninspiring. But aside from the semantic errors it put across your beef quite adequately... The rest of the material in the issue ranges itself in two parallels: the very good – and the very bad. On the excellent side comes “I Hope You Are Shocked” which was a remarkable cogent piece of work. Eminently worthwhile. More of this, if possible. Also, the letter section, which was a lively one indeed, and sections of the book department though other sections show only too well the habit of receiving review copies but seldom reading them... The Slotkin story was merely bad. Nothing more can be said for it. The three Ludwig pieces were pointless to the point of tediousness. “The Birth of A Galaxy” was merely a re-counting and as such can neither be called good or bad... On the whole, INSIDE/SFA seems a periodical groping for itself. You are trying, that is important. Your layout is superlative, presentation being one-half the success of a magazine, but the material itself is weak. Importunately weak.”



Part III;

A review of the Dangerous Visions anthology by Richard Lupoff. Published by Andy Porter in his FAPA fanzine **TWENTIETH CENTURY UNLIMITED** #2, May, 1971.

Dangerous Visions

Reviewed by Dick Lupoff

Now that Harlan Ellison’s monumental anthology is becoming available as a triple-decked paperback, I suppose that all the people that passed over it in its original hardcover edition (presumably because of the price) and its SF Book Club edition (presumably because they weren’t members of the club) will finally have a chance to read. And, the original wave of reviews and rebuttals generated by the book’s prior appearances have finally quieted down, I suppose we are in for a whole new round of shouts, cries, shrieks and moans.

Somehow I failed to get my two cents in during the first cycle of responses to DV even though I read the book in the Doubleday edition way back when, I dropped a few sentences about it in FAPA and elsewhere, as well as in correspondence and conversation, but somehow never got around to recording a coherent statement about the book. The anticipated new wave of reactions to DV gives me a second chance to say my piece. So...

The idea of a book of sf stories not reprinted from magazines but written especially for that book is far from new – it goes back to Healy’s New Tales of Space and Time (1951!) and includes Fred Pohl’s Star SF series from Ballantine and Damon Knights Orbit series and Ted Carnell’s British series of New Writing in SF. I expect that there are others that do not spring to mind immediately, and of course there are cases of mixed reprint and new anthologies. So certainly this aspect of DV is far from unique, and certainly does not account for the uproar that the book generated.

I think the uproar can be attributed to a combination of four factors:

1.) The book is big – by far the biggest “all original” SF anthology ever published, and one outsized by only a handful of reprint anthologies. Sheer physical bulk impresses.

2.) The authors included represent many of the best-known and most popular in the field – del Rey, Silverberg, Pohl, Farmer...those are the lead-off authors of the book, and that level continues (not without exception, admittedly) through to Spinrad, Zelazny, Delany. It’s true that Harlan didn’t cop the very top names – Heinlein, Bradbury, Clarke – but he got 32 authors, including almost all the other big names. Big name authors impress.

3.) He looked for quality and controversy. Every editor looks for quality, of course; given a good story and a poor one, he’ll choose the good one. But Harlan went out of his way to get his authors to give him stories that violated the taboos, that were too hot to handle, that could never go in the conventional marketplace (the SF magazines, the men’s magazines) because they broke the rules of polite society. Courage and controversy impress.

4.) Harlan himself went out and campaigned for the book, and being one of the most colorful and dynamic figures in the SF field – and with growing fame beyond the field – Harlan for a solid year promoted Dangerous Visions, talking about it at conventions. Writing about it in the fan press, promoting in SFWA as best he could, hammering at the eyeballs and eardrums with Dangerous Visions, Dangerous Visions, Dangerous Visions Harlan Ellison impresses.

As for the book itself, there are built-in features for promoting and exciting: a melodramatic dedication that alone runs almost 100 words, a foreword by Isaac Asimov, another foreword by Isaac Asimov, a very lengthy footnote to Isaac’s

second foreword by Harlan, an introduction by Harlan, an introduction to each story by Harlan, an afterword to each story by the author, an illustration to go with each story...good heavens, one could drop the 33 stories from the book and retain just the encrustations and this would still be a sizable volume.

What I want to do, though, is strip away all the encrustations and illustrations and dedications and consider the 33 stories by grade, rather as a schoolteacher might divide a class into “A” students, “B” students, and so on, and say a little about each story.

The “A”s

Going through this book again, I found that over half the stories were strong enough in my mind that just the title-and-author, or at most a quick glance at the prose brought them back into focus. This kind of strength and vividness is a sign, a good one. Of them no fewer than six earn my personal rating as “A”s – stories with good ideas, good writing, character, style, impact – and without any flaw serious enough to deny them a top rating. Here (in the same order they appear in the book) are the six:

1.) “Riders of the Purple Wage,” Philip Jose Farmer. This is by far the longest story in the book, 70 some pages, that portrays a world of future overpopulation, cultural placebos, personal degeneracy and governmental paternalism that produces a life less like that lived under Orwell’s Big Brother than Forster’s Machine.^[1]

Written in a dizzying style of puns, stream-of-consciousness, flashing perspectives, impressionistic snapshots and typographic tricks, there is a danger that the story will overwhelm the hurried reader. It takes attention and thought; no hurtling paced sword-and-sorcery or space opera fan is likely to see anything without revising his attitude. But such a revision is well worthwhile; the story is powerful and pointed, written with passion and perception, and well worth any honors it receives.

[1]: A reference to E. M. Forster’s 1909 novella “The Machine Stops,” which posits an underground humanity dependent on vast mechanisms for survival. It is credited with predicting instant messaging and the Internet.

What you hold in your hands is more than a book.

It is indeed a story that Philip Jose Farmer (or anyone else) would have had a hard, hard time selling to any conventional sf market. It is exactly the kind of story that needed a Dangerous Visions to contain it, a Harlan Ellison to buy it. It – and too few others – live fully up to the promotion given the book.

2.) “The Night All Time Broke Out” by Brian W. Aldiss. Authors continue to tackle the challenge of writing a new time story, and Aldiss has succeeded, with the invention of a “time gas” that allows people to grow younger, temporarily.

He stroked her pretty hair gently. “Tell you what I thought we should try sometime – dial back to when you were twelve. You must have been very sexy in your pre-teens, and I’d sure as hell love to find out. How about it?”

Or – have one room of your house set permanently on a particularly happy day in your life, which you might wish to visit repeatedly. Or... Well, it’s a beautiful idea, and Aldiss handles it with great skill, and when there is an accident and “all time breaks out,” things get wildly out of hand. It’s not a vital and powerful story like Farmer’s. It’s an amusing story, funny, entertaining, stimulating, occasionally touching. I don’t know why it had to be a Dangerous Vision. It could have appeared in F & SF – or PLAYBOY – but here it is, and it is excellent. It is even, in a way, an end-of-the-world story.

3.) “Faith of Our Fathers” by Philip K. Dick. A lot of SF writers are vaguely leftist (not discounting major exceptions like Heinlein and Poul Anderson), espousing such wildly radical ideas as conservation of natural resources, equal access to decent medical care, reform of various economic inequities, and so on. (See the Farmer story for an example). Phil Dick’s story is set in a future Communist Vietnam, but before the cry of “Red” goes up. He paints a picture of numbing bureaucratic tyranny and forced conformity that does jibe with Orwell’s vision.

Dick’s major theme in almost all of his stories is an exploration of the nature of reality. This story is no exception and is, in fact, one of his most disquieting attempts. Look, reader, imagine we are sitting around a table and an object is placed upon it that each of us sees differently. You see a billiard ball, I see a burning candle, another person sees an open book, etc. Now common sense tells us that “whatever is there is there,” and the fact that we have multiple perceptions does not alter the fact that there lies behind those perceptions a single reality. But Dick says, what if there lies behind a single perception – a multiple reality? If we all saw the same object, say an ashtray, but if we were by some means (in the story a drug) permitted to penetrate beyond the ashtray and perceive reality, then we would see, each in turn, a ball, a candle, a book...?

One reads the story, gasps, ponders, rereads, scratches one’s head, goes back a couple of pages...

4.) “Gonna Roll the Bones” by Fritz Leiber. This is a story that would have been a classic in WEIRD TALES in that magazine’s finest days, that would have been at least best-of-issue in any of UNKNOWN’s 39 editions., that would easily be a lead novelette in today’s F & SF. It may not be very dangerous but it is a powerful and chilling vision.

The story is a pure-quill weird fantasy, with Death personified one of the leading characters, the protagonist feeling (literally) the Chill of the Void between the stars, magnificently evoked suspense, restrained violence. All this laid against an Old West gambling setting that brims over with colorful corroborative detail. Further, the characters are real and sympathetic. So read it as a sort of suspense story about gamblers, read it as a weird tale, read it as some kind of high-flown allegory if you want to (I don’t), but don’t miss it.

5.) “Sex and/or Mr. Morrison” by Carol Emshwiller. Well, America (and I suppose most of the world) is undergoing its own Cultural Revolution, and unlike the one in China, it is

really a cultural revolution. We are asking questions we have previously dared not ask (or even think, saying things we had previously dared not say. Some of it as silly and trivial as the Free Speech kids marching around hollering “Fuck!” “Shit!” and other daring naughties (didn’t D. H. Lawrence settle that?). But much of it is sane, healthy, vigorous and constructive: the music, the writing, the sexuality, the effort to ingest mind-stimulating rather than mind-deadening materials.

Carol Emshwiller writes about the sexes, about the interest that boys and girls have in each other, in their bodies and their relationships, and about our ridiculous repression of this curiosity. Her story is at once amusingly light and profound, and I thought only its science fictional ending a flaw. If she had written it as a straight, realistic story...But read it anyway. Its virtues far outweigh its one significant flaw...

6.) “Aye, and Gomorrah...” by Samuel R. Delany. The phallicism of the rocket ship is long familiar, and more recently we are familiar with the complimentary symbol of the giant space wheel. The birthing thrust of man’s drive to travel beyond the amniotic atmosphere is part of today’s mythology, and how great an element of sexual symbolism lies behind the glamour of space remains to be assessed.

Delany assigns a new dimension of sexuality to space travelers, a new and neutered fraternity of gelded spacemen and spayed spacemen in the future. (A literal interpretation of the story observes this to rest on an elementary confusion of sterilization with castration; a more penetrating analysis recognizes Delany’s psychological acuteness in identifying sterilization with castration.)

And in a world of neuter space travelers, where the price of escape from earth is the abandonment of sexuality, what will the reaction of normally sexed men and women be to returning spacers? The story probes deeply into the reactions of both the spacers and the “normals” who encounter them on earth.



The “B”s

DV contains six “A” stories – five if the flawed ending of “Sex and/or Mr. Morrison” should knock it down a notch, but let’s leave it up there. There are nine “B” stories, and I don’t use the term as one would “B” movie. The nine are very good stories; very good. It is not their weakness, but the extra strength of the “A”s that separates the two groups, and even at that, several of the “B”s – Kris Neville’s disquieting “From the Government Printing Office,” R. A. Lafferty’s ingenious “Land of the Great Horses,” Ballard’s wrenching “The Recognition” could easily slip across the line and be counted “A” stories.

The other “B”s, in my opinion, aside from Neville, Lafferty and Ballard, are the stories by Bob Silverberg, Fred Pohl, Robert Bloch, Larry Eisenberg, John T. Sladek and Norman Spinrad. All good stories, all well worth reading, all worthy of a place in a major anthology like Dangerous Visions.

The “C”s and “D”s

That leaves 14 “C”s and “D”s. I count eight “C”s and will not enumerate the stories or authors – all are perfectly competent, professionally turned out, saleable, publishable and readable stories. All would do perfectly well in a typical issue of a typical science fiction or men’s magazine.

If we are lucky it is a revolution.

Then he turned and headed straight for home, but he took the long way, around the world.



I am not sure why they are in this book. I suspect a slimmer volume of Dangerous Visions would be a better volume. If only the fifteen “A” and “B” stories had been used, for instance, I think the sheer quality of this book would have been overwhelming. With the “C”s included, the average is pulled down, but there’s really nothing there to be ashamed of. And the bulk and the contents page look the better.

There are six “D”s – sub-marginal stories that might have made it in the second- and third-rank sf magazines when the magazine field was bigger than it is now, or that today might make it into the third- or fourth-rank man’s magazines. These are the borderliners, the “maybe”s, the kind of manuscript an editor holds balanced in one hand while he looks at his stock of material. If he’s hungry, he buys; if he’s full, he bounces.

The “E”s

Four stories, I think, deserve to be singled out for particular condemnation. Several of the “D”s were so slight that they had almost no value, but at least they were not insults to the reader. Now these four...

Lester del Rey’s “Evensong” has God reduced to a poor, hunted, terrified little critter who is finally tracked down and destroyed by man. Poo!

Henry Slesar’s “Ersatz” is about this wandering soldier who is taken in by some kind hearted proles who try to make him happy, but the food is reprocessed sawdust, and the wine is some kind of faked guk and the mattress is uncomfortable, and – the shocker, man! – the sexy babe they send to give him aa good time is – are you ready? A man in drag! Oh, wow.

Poul Anderson’s “Eutopia” is about cross-cultural shock when this explorer lands in a society where he seems to be getting along until he buggers the local warlord’s son and then finds out that this society doesn’t dig buggery. Oh, Lord!

And Theodore Sturgeon...oh, Theodore Sturgeon, the man who brought love and humanity into science fiction as never before...Sturgeon produces the abominable “If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your Sister?” Now dig this: Somewhere in the universe is a planet where certain very valuable stuff comes from, but when our hero tries to visit there, he finds that’s there is this galaxy-wide conspiracy to keep the planet secret and to keep everyone from going there.

In traditional one-man-against-the-system manner, our hero fights his way to the mystery planet and discovers that everybody there has absolute Peace, Happiness, Joy,

Sanity and Health. And the reason they have all these goodies is also the reason they're shunned by the rest of the planets: they all dig incest! Daddy screws daughter, son socks it to Mom, bub and sis play in the hay, etc., etc.

Now this is supposed to shock hell out of the reader. (OH, come on!) And it's supposed to be at least a potentially valid idea (seems to me that a number of human societies have practiced incest without rising especially high in the peace-happiness-sanity-joy-and-health sweepstakes). The whole thing is presented in a glowing, revelatory fashion as if Sturgeon had discovered the Master Key to the Gospels and was presenting it with a flourish to a quiveringly expectant mankind.

Oh, the story is horrible, horrible.

CONCLUSION

Dangerous Visions was advertised as a landmark volume of science fiction, and I believe that it is exactly that. It had a highly successful sale in the expensive Doubleday edition. As a Book Club selection, Harlan says that it had the lowest rejection-per-member-rate in the history of the club, selling over 50,000 copies. As a paperback it should sell hundreds of thousands more.

For the sake of its "A" and "B" stories, it can stand with the best anthologies in the field, The "C"s and "D"s are ignorable or forgivable. The few "E"s...well, when it was good it was very, very good and when it was bad...

In terms of its "dangerousness," I suppose it did knock down a few barriers; Farmer's story did, Delany's story may have, and Dick's story sticks and sticks in the brain.

A second volume, to be known as Again, Dangerous Visions is to be put out in the spring of 1972. In addition to all the ground-rules laid down in the first book, Harlan has added the stricture that no author who was present in DV can appear in ADV. That eliminates 32 writers, many of whom are the most potent potential contributors around the SF World. But there are, I think, about 380 members of the Science Fiction Writers of America and that leaves some 350 of them, plus other writers coming from outside our field (or from other countries) to compete for places in ADV.

Piers Anthony had stated openly that purely as a matter of ego, he was upset not to have been in DV, and he competed for and won a place in ADV. Jim Blish, one of the really outstanding men in science fiction, was not in DV but told me recently that he hoped to be in ADV. I can say that I myself had a "dangerous vision" that even my agent declined to try to market for me. All sorts of editors said all sorts of nice things about it, but they wouldn't lay out contracts. Harlan bought it and it will be in ADV as a novella. I have to say that that sale was a bigger thrill than one to Campbell would have been.

I'm very excited, looking forward to Again, Dangerous Visions next spring. I think the whole science fiction community will again be excited, as it was by Dangerous Visions. Meanwhile, if you haven't read the 33 stories, get them in one edition or another and hole up for a solid weekend to read this book!



Part IV: **THE KONG PAPERS**, a collaboration between Harlan Ellison and artist Bill Rotsler, published in 1969.

Original art by Ulrika O'Brien
